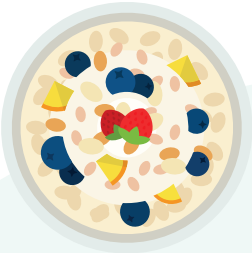
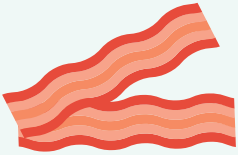
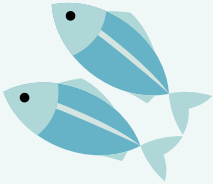
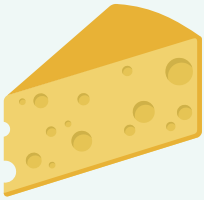
Greater Manchester Nutrition & Hydration

Nutrition and Covid-19 Recovery









What is Covid-19?

Covid-19 is a lung condition caused by novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, which has reached a pandemic status. It can affect other systems in the body and some forms are quite mild.

What is Long Covid?

Around 10% of patients who have tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 virus remain unwell beyond three weeks, and a smaller proportion for months.

Some symptoms of Long Covid:

- Extreme tiredness (fatigue)
- Shortness of breath
- Anxiety and depression
- Heart palpitations
- Dizziness
- Difficulty sleeping (insomnia)
- Chest pains or tightness
- Pins and needles
- Tinnitus, earaches
- Joint or muscle pain
- Feeling sick, diarrhoea, stomach aches, loss of appetite
- Rashes
- A high temperature, cough, headaches, sore throat, changes to sense of smell and taste
- Problems of memory and concentration (also known as 'brain fog')

Why is nutrition important while recovering from Covid-19?

Eating well during recovery is important to prevent malnutrition and support the preservation of muscle mass. If you had a prolonged hospital stay, you may have been asked to eat well without restrictions, had to take nutritional supplements, or may even have been fed via a tube.

Now you are getting better, it is important that you continue to meet your body's nutritional needs, especially for protein. A protein rich diet will help prevent further loss of muscle, and perhaps, alongside building up your activity, will help regain what you have lost.

It is essential to eat regularly, including...

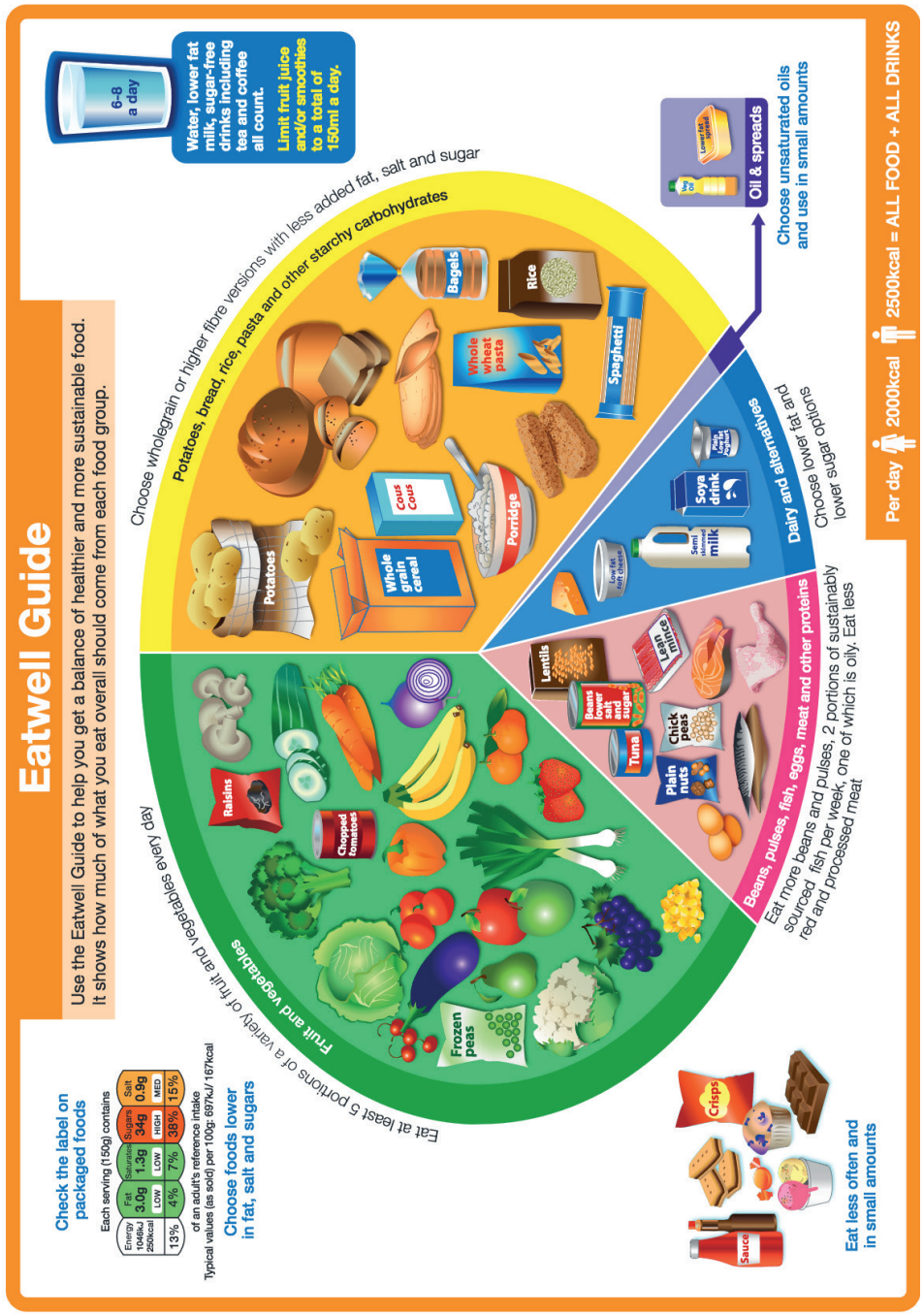
3 meals and 1-3 snacks if needed.

It is important to keep hydrated.

Try to keep your meals balanced by including carbohydrates, protein and some vegetables to your meals.

If you struggle eating 3 main meals, try 6 smaller meals throughout the day.

The Eat well guide below shows you information on what to eat to ensure you are getting a balanced diet:



Meeting nutritional needs to aid recovery

It is important to eat well and maintain a healthy weight. This will help you to maintain your strength and fitness to ensure that your body has enough nutrients (such as energy, protein, vitamins and minerals) to help protect you from infection and recover from illness.

If you are overweight or underweight, this is not good for your overall health and impacts your risk of becoming ill from Covid-19 and on your recovery.

If your Body Mass Index (BMI) is 25kg/m^2 or over, this might not be the best time to lose weight. If you are eating well and still losing weight, this means you might need to increase your oral intake to meet your body's nutritional needs and maintain your weight. You might want to avoid low sugar or low fat foods and try high energy foods, while you are trying to prevent weight loss.

The NHS website can help you to work out your Body mass index (BMI). Or ask your Dietitian to calculate this for you.

www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/bmi-calculator/

Food fortification

This is a process of adding extra nutrients to food or meals, to make your diet more nourishing, for example higher calories or higher in proteins. In this booklet, we focus on adding extra protein to your meals and snacks to help boost protein content in your diet.

What are proteins?

Proteins are one of the macronutrients, which consist of smaller compounds called amino acids. It is essential for building and the maintenance of body tissues and muscles. We require them in greater amounts when healing wounds for example post surgery, post injury or after illness.

What are examples of protein foods?
Meat, poultry and fish
Dairy – cheese, yoghurt, eggs
Any milk – full fat, semi-skimmed, skimmed cow's milk, sheep's milk, goat's milk, soya milk and other milk alternatives
Highest protein content of plant milk alternative is soya
Milk powder (any supermarket brand or Marvel)
Nuts, peanut butter and seeds
Legumes, beans and lentils
Other plant proteins – mycoprotein, soya protein, tofu, Quorn

Fortified milk recipe

Use 1 pint of semi or skimmed milk in a jug and mix with 4-5 tablespoons of skimmed milk powder, such as Marvel, or any supermarket brand.

You can add this to soups, milky drinks such as coffee, hot chocolate, tea, Horlicks, Ovaltine or cappuccino. This can also be used to make up desserts, puddings or other savoury dishes like mash potatoes.

How to add protein to your meals

BREAKFAST

- Add fortified milk or yoghurt to your cereal or porridge
- Make poached or boiled egg and have this with baked beans / toast
- Cheese on toast
- Toast and poached or boiled egg
- Try snacking on yoghurt with seeds (full fat or low fat), or try protein yoghurt

LUNCH

- Add low fat cheese or slice of smoked salmon or chicken to your sandwich
- Add peanut butter to your toast or sandwich
- Try snacking on yoghurts or handful of nuts
- Add tofu, chicken, seeds or nuts to your salad
- Add fortified milk to your soup, dessert or pudding
- Sardines on toast, toast and beans or egg on toast

EVENING MEAL

- Meat or fish with your main meal
- Lasagne with cheese
- Lentil, meat or fish curry
- Add grated cheese onto your meals
- Add peanuts to your curry or other dishes
- Snack on yoghurt, match box size cheese and crackers, handful of nuts

SUPPER

- Baked beans on toast
- Cheese or peanut butter on toast

DRINKS

- Try drinking milk or fortified milk between meals
- Add fortified milk to milky drinks or milkshake or Complan
- Make tea, coffee or other drinks more milky (using fortified milk)

How to overcome symptoms of Long Covid?

- **Fatigue** – try to eat regular meals and include protein sources at mealtimes. Consider multivitamins if you are eating less than ½ of your meals.
- **Taste changes** – eat food that is bland at first and then add flavour to it, try colder food as hot might have strong taste. Add seasoning to flavour your food – experiment with spices, herbs, pepper, chutneys or pickles in your cooking. If you go off certain foods, try them again as taste changes with time. Brush teeth regularly.
- **Dry mouth post stay at intensive care unit** – this can happen post using oxygen therapy or inhalers. Try including sauces with your meals and add extra gravy and drink plenty of fluids in and between meals. Try sour candies, mint or gums before or after meals.
- **Diarrhoea** – make sure you eat regular meals and drink plenty of fluids. You might want to reduce your fibre intake when having diarrhoea, but discuss this with your Dietitian.
- **Swallow issues** – follow diet restriction set out by your speech therapist during a swallow assessment.

Fluids

It is important to stay hydrated. All fluids count (except alcohol).

Try to drink 8-10 cups of fluids per day, which includes water, diluted fruit juice, milk, coffee and tea. You might want to increase fluids in hot weather, or if you are losing fluids from sweating, diarrhoea or you are constipated.

Vitamin D and Covid–19?

Vitamin D is one of the fat soluble vitamins. We need vitamin D to help absorb calcium which is needed for our bones and supports our muscle health.

Vitamin D is a regulator of the immune response and has recently emerged as another potential risk factor in the Covid-19 pandemic.

How to get your vitamin D?

- Small amounts of vitamin D present in some foods; oily fish like salmon, sardines or herring, liver, egg yolk, and some fortified foods (breakfast cereals).
- Most of vitamin D we usually get from sun exposure in the summer between April and September – (difficult if you are shielding or covering your skin from the sun or have darker complexion).
- Please discuss vitamin D supplementation with your GP.
- The NHS is offering a free vitamin D during winter time for those at high risk of Covid-19 infection, please visit Pharmacy2u website for more details.

Please note that vitamin D supplementation shouldn't be used to solely treat or prevent Covid-19 infection!

Physical activity

It is encouraged to continue regular physical activity while taking precautions. This is important as lack of physical activity can lead to worsening of your health condition, loss of skeletal muscle mass and weight gain.

Please speak to your physiotherapist to give you tailored advice on exercises.

Healthy balanced diet – post recovery

To prevent weight regain and worsening of any health condition, it is suggested once your weight has stabilised to continue a healthy balanced diet, such as lean protein sources, wholegrain carbohydrates, fruit and vegetables. Long term health benefits of a healthy, balanced diet improve immune function.

Sample menu – how to meet 60 - 80g protein per day?

Breakfast

Porridge or cereal with fortified milk *OR* 2 boiled eggs and 1 Toast

Porridge or cereal with soya milk *OR* beans on toast **(V)**

Mid–morning

Yoghurt with handful of seeds (such as sunflower or pumpkin seeds) *OR* cheese and 2-3 crackers

Soya yoghurt with seeds (pumpkin or sunflower) *OR* vegan cheese and 2-3 crackers **(V)**

Lunch

Tuna or ham and cheese sandwich with lettuce

Lentil soup with slice of bread **(V)**

Mid–afternoon

Handful of nuts **(V)**

Evening meal

Lasagne *OR* chicken and veg and boiled potatoes *OR* salmon, mash potatoes and veg

Quorn chilli with beans *OR* veggie burger (soya or bean) with homemade wedges and salad **(V)**

Supper (optional)

Small dessert - yoghurt, rice pudding or mousse

Toast with peanut butter and sliced banana **(V)**

(V) = Vegan Sample menu

Please contact your Dietitian if you feel like you need tailored advice for a specific medical condition – as this diet sheet is a general resource for nutrition and Covid-19 recovery.

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GMCA GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY

NHS in Greater Manchester